THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government has constituted a Committee of 3 senior officers of the Ministry of Communications to enquire into various aspects of the issues involved. The Committee has been advised to submit the report within 2 weeks. Further action will be taken on the receipt of the report.

(c) No attempt is being made at any level to suppress the matter.

Shukla Commission recommendations on Civil Aviation in the North-Eastern Region

*429. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the salient recommendations of the Shukla Commission and the Task Force on the improvement of civil aviation sector in the North-East in terms of the PM's special package; and

(b) the action plan finalised, target fixed and achievements made so far in implementing each of the recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) (I) Salient recommendations of the Shukla Commission concerning Civil Aviation are as follows:—

(i) Guwahati should be made a regional hub for Indian Airlines.

(ii) International flights should operate out of the region to destinations like" Dhaka, Chittagong, Mandalay and Yangon.

(iii) An integrated plan for the utilisation of the Guwahati international air cargo facility should be prepared by the Ministry of Commerce in consultation with the North-Eastern States.

(iv) Short take-off-and-landing (STOL) aircraft should be inducted into the North-East circuit.

(v) The Government should examine whether some or all air supply and passenger sorties being provided by Indian Air Force (IAF) could be returned to the Civil Sector.

(II) Salient recommendations of the Task Force set up by the Ministry of Civil Aviation on North-East are as follows:—

(i) Expansion/construction of new terminal building at Agartala, Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Imphal, Lilabari and Tezpur.

(ii) Extention of runways at Agartala, Silchar, Lilabari and Dibrugarh for safe operation of AB-320 type of aircraft.

(iii) Acquisition of land for airport development works at Agartala, Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Silchar and Shillong.

(iv) Provision of Doppler Very-High Omni Range (DVOR)/Distance Measuring Equipment (DME) and visual aids at Silchar, Tezpur, Dimapur, Jorhat, Lilabari and Shillong.

(v) Facilities for night operations at Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Lilabari, Silchar and Tezpur.

(vi) Provision of Instrument Landing System (ILS) at Silchar, Dimapur, Lilabari and Dibrugarh.

(b) The following actions have been taken for the promotion of Civil Aviation in the North-Eastern region:—

(i) Guwahati Airport is being upgraded to serve as a regional hub by way of expansion/modification of terminal building, extension of apron. Strengthening/extension of runway upto 12000 ft. and associated facilities.

(ii) The Government has decided to declare Guwahati as an International Airport.

(iii) Cargo complex facility has been established at Guwahati Airport for handling perishable goods. Government of India has also granted permission for limited export of cargo from Guwahati. Further, the required land has already been acquired for construction of a full-fledged international cargo complex which will be taken up after detailed study of traffic/cargo potential.

(iv) The Government has decided to expeditiously introduce turboprop aircraft in the North-Eastern Region.

(v) Pawan Hans Helicopters Limited have submitted a proposal to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for taking over the part of air maintenance task in Arunachal Pradesh from Indian Air Force. The proposal is still under consideration of the State Government.

(vi) The Government has decided to provide Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) to Turbo-prop aircraft at international prices and to treat the ATF provided to Turbo-prop aircraft as a "declared good" under the Central Sales Tax Act, 1956 which would cap the sales tax at 4%.

(vii) Government has also decided to exempt all currently operated routes in the North-East from Inland Air Travel Tax (IATT).

(viii) The recommendations contained in the Task Force report with regard to development of airport infrastructure and airlinks to the region are at various stages of implementation.

GDP Growth rate in 1999—2000

†*430. DR. D. MASTHAN:
SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the annual growth rate of gross domestic product is estimated to be less than the target fixed on account of decline in annual growth rate of agricultural production during the financial year 1999-2000;

(b) if not, what is Government's reaction in this regard; and

(c) what are the annual growth rates estimated in agriculture, industry and service sectors during the above year and how these rates compare to those in the last year?

- THE FINANCE MINISTER (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) to (c) Growth in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated at 5.9 per cent during 1999-2000 as against the target growth rate of 6.5 per cent per annum envisaged for the Ninth Plan (1997—2002). Growth in GDP originating in agriculture sector during 1999-2000 is estimated at 0.8 per cent against 7.2 per cent in 1998-99. The various policy initiatives undertaken over the last few years are expected to put India on a sustained, equitable and job creating growth path of 7 to 8 per cent per year within a decade. The annual overall and sectoral real GDP growth rates at factor cost at 1993-94 prices are as follows:—

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.